

# airing

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## OARSOME DUDES

WE MEET OLYMPIC ROWERS  
PAUL AND GARY O'DONOVAN

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### THE FOOD ISSUE

THE PEOPLE & PLACES  
WHETTING OUR APPETITE

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# WILDE THING

London's Hotel Café Royal has a storied history of politicians, pioneers and princesses.

**Lucy White** raises a toast to its 21st-century incarnation.

**S**lap, bang in the thick of Regent Street, on the grade II listed Quadrant, **Hotel Café Royal** couldn't be any more central. And as the Café Royal restaurant, it was once the beating heart of London's glitterati, welcoming the likes of Virginia Woolf, Winston Churchill, Noël Coward, Liz Taylor, Princess Di and David Bowie through its illustrious doors until closure in 2008. Our very own Oscar Wilde was also a regular, hence the hotel's bar named in his honour; a glorious, mirrored confection that makes Versailles look austere and where you can sit in Oscar's favourite seat and feast on jolly-spiffing afternoon tea.

Do not be fooled by its starry history, though (it reopened as a hotel in 2012), for its guest rooms are distinctly contemporary. My junior suite was ginormous and, despite the enviable aspect on to bustling Regent Street, blessed with superior sound-proofing. While I could've done with a higher IQ to conquer the flashy light system and oscillating TV, there was much to admire about the room's

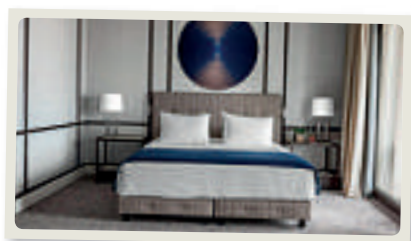
smooth, rusticated Portland stone-style walls, its pink and green accents and the panoramically marbled bathroom, including giant bathtub. The swish spa is also an excellent USP, while no query is too much trouble for the dapper concierge. No wonder that Hotel Café Royal is the official home of the Frieze art fair this October 5-8,

It is also winningly close to Soho. On my visit I replaced a watch strap at **Nixon** on Newburgh Street, bought a bottle of dreamy Santal 33 at **Le Labo** perfumery on Beak Street, worried my credit card at **Liberty** and had a beautiful dirty martini at Upper James Street's plush **Bob Bob Ricard**. In the words of dearest Oscar: "I can resist everything except temptation." Rooms from £360. (68 Regent Street, +44 20 7406 3333; [hotelcaferoyal.com](http://hotelcaferoyal.com))



**Aer Lingus** flies from Dublin, Cork, Shannon and Belfast to **London** multiple times daily.

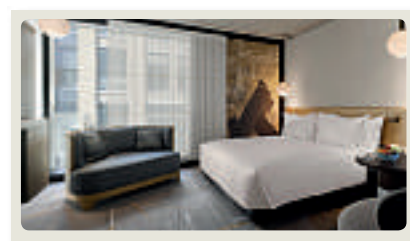
## 3 NEW CRIBS ON THE BLOCK



**LYON, FRANCE** The **Villa Maïa** is a lone wolf in a city of old-world hotels. Contemporary luxe at its best, rooms have a restful colour palette, while downstairs is a riot of hues. Its location makes for superb views too, while the Michelin-starred restaurant, Têtedoie, makes for finest dining. Rooms from €450. (8 rue du Professeur Pierre Marion, +33 478 160 101; [villa-maia.com](http://villa-maia.com))



**SAN FRANCISCO, USA** The creation of two brothers from Kerry, **Hotel VIA** is within a baseball's throw of AT&T Park - it is right across the street, making it a no-brainer for Giants fans. A boutique proposition, it is sleek, stylish and, remarkably, boasts the city's first rooftop lounge, with cracking city views. Rooms from \$279. (138 King Street, +1 415 200 4977; [hotelviasf.com](http://hotelviasf.com))



**LONDON, UK** The **Nobu Hotel** in Shoreditch is the go-to for devotees of the global restaurant brand co-owned by Robert De Niro. With restaurateur Nobuyuki Matsuhisa at the helm, Japanese design influences abound and the "greatest hits" dishes will please loyal customers. Rooms from £249. (10-50 Willow Street, +44 20 7683 1200; [nobuhotelshoreditch.com](http://nobuhotelshoreditch.com))